DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 157 654 RC 010 624

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TITLE Some Attitudinal Differences Among Black and White High School Seniors Aspiring to Become Teachers.
INSTITUTION South Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station, Clemson.
SPONS AGENCY Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 30 Aug 78
NOTE 30p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society (San Francisco, California, August 30 - September 3, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Black Students; *Career Choice; Career Planning; *Caucasian Students; Comparative Analysis; Expectation; Females; *High School Students; Males; *Occupational Aspiration; Rural Youth; Seniors; Sex Differences; *Student Attitudes; Teachers; Urban Youth; Vocational Interests
IDENTIFIERS *South Carolina

ABSTRACT

Using data from a cross-sectional sample of 4,376 South Carolina high school seniors in 1969 to determine the differences in the perception of conditions relating to teacher choice among white and black females and males, the study explored the relative perceived importance of the following items in choosing a career: the chance to make a lot of money, the opportunity to help others, the chance to become an important person, steady employment, the opportunity to be one's own boss, and the chance for excitement. Student aspirations to the teaching profession, all professional positions except teaching, and all non-professional positions were compared and coded according to categories compatible with the Census Bureau's occupational classification system. Self-administered questionnaires were given to 1,510 white boys, 762 black boys, 1,464 white girls, and 762 black girls in 41 (27 primarily white and 14 primarily black) rural and urban high schools in 26 South Carolina counties. Some findings were that: the most important occupational desideratum for both black and white boys, regardless of career aspiration, was the opportunity for steady employment; money was a more desired job attribute for white boys than girls; black girls were concerned with the opportunity to make a lot of money and the chance to be an important person; the chance to help others ranked at or near the top of career desideratum for all seniors aspiring to teach; teaching attracted those groups who, for whatever reasons, had relatively limited professional level career possibilities. (NQ)

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SOME ATTITUDINAL DIFFERENCES AMONG BLACK AND WHITE HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS ASPIRING TO BECOME TEACHERS*

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*Support for this research was provided in part from funds by the South Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station.

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Rural Sociological Society, San Francisco, California, 30 August-3 September 1978.

RC 010624

"Some Attitudinal Differences Among Black and White
High School Seniors Aspiring to Become Teachers"

This paper continues a line of research concerned with the social background characteristics and occupational attitudes of young people oriented toward the teaching profession. Building on the findings of earlier work by Schwarzweller and Lyson (1978), Lyson (1978), Payne and Dunkelberger (1977), Lortie (1975), Getzels and Jackson (1963), Pavalko (1965) and others[1], we hope to further specify the nature of the teacher recruitment process. Specifically, we shall be concerned with some attitudinal correlates among race, sex and teacher aspiration for South Carolina high school seniors.

It has been shown that teaching as a career choice or status attainment strategy, often serves as a feasible upward mobility facilitator for those segments of American youth whose professional career options, for whatever reasons, are limited or blocked. Schwarzweller and Lyson (1978), for example, found that young people from rural areas, who perform less well in school, and who come from lower social class thresholds are more likely to choose teaching as a professional career option than their counterparts who come from urban backgrounds, who are academically superior, and who have higher social class origins. Additionally, Lyson (1978) has shown that the ascribed attributes of race and sex also affect a youngster's professional options. Blacks in general, and women in particular, are more oriented toward, and found disproportionately in, the teaching profession.

Another line of research approaches the teacher recruitment process in terms of the personality characteristics, attitudinal configurations,

and value orientations of entrants into the teaching profession (see for example -- Lortie, 1975; Getzels and Jackson, 1963; and Wright and Tuska, 1968). Although efforts to find a single personality type among teachers have not been successful (Getzels and Jackson, 1963), Lortie (1975) has identified five "attractors" (e.g., the interpersonal theme; the service theme; the continuation theme; material benefits; and the theme of time compatibility) and two "general facilitators" (e.g., the wide ranging decision; and the subjective warrant) to teaching. Furthermore, he notes, that these "attractors and facilitators of teaching are more potent for women than for men." (Lortie, 1975:53).

Other researchers concerned with the occupational aspirations of high school and college students, notably Payne and Dunkelberger (1977), Wright and Tuska (1968) and Kronus (1969), have aslo examined various attitudinal configurations and personality characteristics associated with teacher aspiration. Generally speaking, most of this research relies on data from case studies of teachers or uses survey results from small, unrepresentative samples. (An exception is Payne and Dunkelberger's study of 1500 Alabama high school seniors.) Furthermore, few, if any, researchers examine the relationship between the social background of those aspiring to teach and their attitudes toward teaching. One gets the impression that the nature and character of the teacher role is perceived in more or less the same fashion among all entrants.

In this paper we hope to specify more clearly the relationship between two key structural antecedents in the career planning process (sex and race) and a series of six career desideratum as they pertain

to a desire to become a teacher. Specifically, to determine the nature of possible differences in the perception of conditions relating to teacher choice among white males, black males, white females, and black females we will explore the relative perceived importance of the following items in choosing a career: 1) the chance to make a lot of money; 2) the opportunity to help other people; 3) the chance to become an important person; 4) steady employment; 5) the opportunity to be one's own boss; and 6) the chance for excitement.

Although our primary purpose is to better understand the teacher recruitment process, we shall also examine the career desideratum noted above as they relate to youngsters aiming for other professional and non-professional work roles. Career desideratum surrounding teacher aspiration placed in the context of the general occupational orientations of our study population will more clearly specify, not only the general perceptions behind the status attainment process, but also identify the common threads and unique orientations between those wishing to become teachers and those with other occupational aspirations.

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

Sample

Data for this study are part of USDA Research Project S-81: "Development of Human Resource Potentials of Rural Youth in the South and Their Patterns of Mobility."[1] Data were collected from high school seniors in South Carolina in 1969. Comparable data were also gathered in 1968 from seniors in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. The study population under consideration here consists of the total South Carolina segment only (N = 4376). The South Carolina

portion is a state-wide stratified random sample of 1,510 white boys, 762 black boys, 1,464 white girls, and 762 black girls in 41 rural and urban high schools in 26 South Carolina counties. Data were obtained through self-administered questionnaires. All seniors present in school the day the questionnaire was administered are included in the study. No attempt was made to gather information from those absent on the day the field worker visited the school. It should be noted that in 1969, most South Carolina high schools were operating under the so-called "freedom of choice" method of assigning pupils to school by race. Our sample includes students from 27 primarily white (over 50 percent) high schools and 14 primarily black (over 50 percent) high schools. (For a more detailed account of the data collection procedures and the population composition for the South Carolina segment of S-81, see Boyd; 1979).)

Study Variables

To determine occupational aspiration the following question was asked: "If you were completely free to choose any job, what would you desire most as a lifetime job?" Responses were edited and coded according to categories compatible with the occupational classification system used by the U.S. Bureau of Census. Teacher was coded as a separate occupational aspiration in the professional, technical and kindred stratum. Comparisons will be made among students aspiring to: 1) the teaching profession; 2) all professional positions except teaching; and 3) all non-professional positions.

The relative importance of various career desideratum in the occupational selection process were determined from responses to the following question: "In picking the job you would most like to have,

how important are the following things about the job?" Six statements tapping various occupational dimensions were listed: 1) Offers the chance to make a lot of money; 2) Gives you a chance to help other people; 3) Gives you a chance to become an important person; 4) Gives you steady employment; 5) Gives you a chance to be your own boss; 6) Offers a chance for excitement. Students were asked to rank these dimensions as: 1) very important; 2) important; 3) not very important; and 4) not at all important. For our purposes a dichotomy separating very important (no. 1) from important, not very important, not at all important (nos. 2, 3, 4) is employed here.

Race and sex, both control variables, were determined by responses to fixed-choice questions.

FINDINGS

A rank ordering (most important to least important) of career desideratum by occupational aspiration is presented in Table 1 for each subpopulation under consideration. Table 2 presents correlation coefficients (Yule's Q) for whites and blacks between the relative importance of each career desideratum and sex. Table 3 reports the correlations for boys and girls between race and the importance of the desideratum.

General Patterns of Career Desideratum

Table 1 shows that the most important occupational desideratum for both black and white boys, regardless of career aspiration, is the opportunity for steady employment. Between 60 and 70 percent of the boys in the present study population indicated that finding steady

work was the key consideration in their career planning. Furthermore, correlations for boys (Table 2) between race and the importance of steady employment are relatively small for all occupational aspiration categories.

For girls, the relative importance of steady employment is of primary concern only for those aspiring to non-professional occupations. Girls with professional aspirations, on the other hand, appear more concerned with the opportunities to help other people. Steady employment as a career desideratum for professionally oriented girls ranks second to the helping orientation. However, it is interesting to note that, at the professional level, black girls are considerably more concerned (Q = .418-teachers/Q = .516-other professions) with steady employment than white girls.

The chance to help other people ranks high for boys aspiring to teaching but is relatively unimportant for boys with other professional and non-professional aspirations. In fact, among those with lower levels of aspiration, the desire to help others ranks near the bottom of all career desideratum.

Additionally, correlation coefficients in Tables 2 and 3 show that, at all levels of aspiration, the wish to help other people is stronger for blacks and women that for whites or men. Both sex and race differences are especially strong among those seniors aspiring for professional jobs other than teaching.

The chance to make a lot of money ranks high among desired job qualities for both blacks and seniors with non-professional job aspirations. For males with lower levels of career aspiration the

opportunity to make a lot of money ranked second only to the desire for steady employment. For girls with similar levels of aspiration, the money orientation ranked third behind securing a steady job and the chance to help other people. Additionally, for blacks the chance to make money ranked either second or third among career desideratum at all levels of career aspiration.

Sex and race differences in the importance of money are further displayed in Tables 2 and 3. Correlations within race categories (Table 2) show that, for whites, money is a more desired job attribute for boys than girls. For blacks, however, sex differences do not appear. Correlations between races (Table 3) reveal that blacks, especially those aiming for professional careers, are considerably more concerned with the monetary return of their jobs than whites.

Three other career desideratum are noted in Tables 1-3 (i.e., the chance to become an important person; the chance to be one's own boss; and the chance for excitement). Generally speaking, these three occupational characteristics were of lesser importance at all aspiration levels, than the desideratum previously discussed. However, two of the three manifested interesting and important race or sex differences and merit a brief note here.

First, considerably more blacks than whites would like to find a job that gives them the chance to become an important person. Between 32.1 percent and 46.7 percent (Table 1) of the black seniors in the present study felt that in picking the job they would most like to have, the opportunity to become an important person was very important. White youth, on the other hand, are not overtly concerned with the

prestige dimension of occupational status. Only between 7.1 percent and 24.8 percent were very concerned with the chance to become an important person.

Second, a job that gives a person a chance to be his/her own boss was deemed especially important for white boys compared to white girls (Table 2) and for black girls compared to white girls (Table 3). Further, with the exception of those aspiring to become teachers, black boys compared to black girls (Table 2), were more likely to desire a job where they could be their own boss. In short, it is the white girls in the present study that seem most unconcerned with the chance to be their own boss.

To briefly summarize, Tables 1-3 seem to indicate that general patterns of career desideratum behind the status attainment process vary by both race and sex. White males, regardless of occupational aspiration, are concerned primarily with steady employment. For those oriented toward teaching, the chance to help othe people, and the opportunity for an exciting career rank high in desired job qualities. The chance for excitement also ranks high for white boys aiming for non-teaching professions. However, for those white boys aspiring to sub-professional positions, the opportunity to earn a lot of money ranks second only to steady employment in career desideratum.

Black males manifest somewhat different patterns. Although steady employment is of primary concern for all black boys, and the chance to help other people is important for those wishing to become teachers, the opportunity to make a lot of money and the opportunity to be an important person rank very high among career desideratum.

Unlike white boys, blacks seem especially concerned with the status dimensions of their jobs. This, of course, may be due to their prolonged relegation to the less rewarding-less prestigeful rungs of the occupational ladder.

The career desideratum of white girls are characterized by two dimensions - the desire to help other people and steady employment. Girls aiming for professional jobs are primarily concerned with the chance to help others while girls with lower aspirations are more interested in steady employment.

Black girls are also primarily interested in finding jobs that provide both the chance to help others and steady employment. However, like black boys, they are also very concerned with the opportunity to make a lot of money and the chance to be an important person.

We shall now turn our attention specifically to patterns of career desideratum as they relate to a desire to become a teacher.

Career Desideratum and Teacher Aspiration

As we noted in the introduction, teaching as a career plan or status attainment strategy attracts those groups who, for whatever reasons, have relatively limited professional level career possibilities. However, even though evidence indicates that teachers are drawn disproportionately from certain groups in the society (e.g., women, blacks, etc.), it would be naive to assume that recruits from these groups approach the decision to enter teaching from the same perspective or with the same expectations. The findings in Tables 1-3 point up some of the attitudinal differences among white boys, black boys, white girls, and black girls aspiring to become teachers.

Generally speaking, two career desideratum characterize the teacher aspirations of all members of our study population: 1) the chance to help other people; and 2) the opportunity for steady employment. Both in a relative and an absolute sense, these two dimensions rank at the top of desired job qualities. The wish to help others was considered somewhat more important by girls, while the desire for steady employment was deemed more important by boys (Table 4).

Looking more closely at the importance of steady employment, it should be noted that although this career desideratum is of primary concern for each subpopulation, it is a relatively less important consideration for white girls. Only 40.8 percent of the white girls indicated steady employment was a "very important" desired job quality. On the other hand, about 60 percent of the seniors in the other race/sex categories felt this desideratum was "very important."

Reasons for this pattern are somewhat unclear, but may have to do with the life contingencies of the various subpopulations under investigation. It seems reasonable to assume. given the traditional role of the husband as main breadwinner in the family, that boys more than girls would be especially concerned with finding a job that promises steady employment. We might further speculate that professionally oriented women, especially white women, generally marry men with either the same or higher occupational status and consequently need not worry about their own earning capability. Professionally oriented black women (e.g., teachers), on the other hand, enter a marriage market dominated by men of lower occupational status. (Proportionately, there

are fewer black men in the professional stratum than white men.) Thus, to insure a "good" family income and a high standard of living, black women must seriously consider working and hence manifest more concern with steady employment than white women.

The chance to make a lot of money and the opportunity to become an important person are career desideratum that are considerably more important for blacks aspiring to teaching than whites (Table 4). In fact, relative to the other career desideratum examined here concern with money and occupational prestige rank at or near the bottom of the list for white boys and girls. For blacks, however, these criteria stand just below the opportunity to help other people and steady employment among desired job qualities.

It appears that whites aspiring to become teachers are less concerned with the visible status dimensions and the imagery (e.g., money and prestige) of the teaching occupation than blacks. White youth that are interested in income and prestige characteristics of their jobs, seem to be more attracted to non-teaching occupations.

For blacks, on the other hand, teaching represents one of only a few professional career options. The avenues to other more lucrative and prestigeful occupations (e.g., medicine, law, engineering, etc.) for blacks are often blocked by subtle and overt forms of discrimination, by various forms of educational tracking, and by social background factors. Consequently, relative to other professional career options, a teaching career represents a proven path to a good income and high prestige within the black community.

Relative to the other career desideratum, whites aspiring to teaching rank the opportunity for excitement high on their lists of desireable job qualities. This is not surprising. Given the relatively low material rewards and marginal prestige vis-a-vis other professional occupations for whites, the relative importance of other factors such as the chance for excitement seem to take on added importance in the decision making process.

For blacks, on the other hand, the chance for excitement, compared to the other career desideratum, is a relatively less important desired job characteristic. However, in an absolute sense, 26.7 percent of the black girls and 37.5 percent of the black boys in the present sample felt that this attribute was "very important." It appears that blacks aspiring to teaching do not consider the chance for excitement less important relative to whites, rather, other desideratum (e.g., money, prestige, etc.) are simply considered more important.

Finally, among those aspiring to teaching in our study population, regardless of race or sex, the chance to be one's own boss ranks relatively low in importance among career desideratum. In an absolute sense, only 10.0 percent of the white girls and about one-fourth of the other race/sex sub-groups thought this job quality was "very important."

SUMMARY

Using data from a cross-sectional sample of South Carolina high school seniors, this paper attempted to specify the relationship between two key structural antecedents in the career planning process (sex and race) and a series of six career desideratum as they pertain to a desire

to become a teacher. Although we were primarily interested in the teacher recruitment process, we also examined the career desideratum noted above as they relate to other status attainment strategies. Below we highlight some of our more important findings.

Table 1 clearly shows that one career desideratum - the opportunity for steady employment - characterizes the entire range of occupational aspirations for all members of our study population except white girls. White girls aiming for teaching and other professional level careers seem relatively less concerned with steady employment and, in fact, with only a few expectations, manifest a wide range indifference to the career desideratum under investigation. It may be that the life contingencies (especially as they relate to marriage opportunities) of white girls are such that they act to dampen somewhat the necessity and consequently the importance of work in their lives. For the other groups under study (e.g., white boys, black boys, black girls), however, the alternative or option of not working is more remote. To attain and maintain an adequate level of income and insure a high standard of living for their families, these groups must enter the world of work.

The chance to help other people ranks at or near the top of career desideratum for all seniors aspiring to teaching. Almost 60 percent of the boys and close to 70 percent of the girls in the present study felt the opportunity to help others was a "very important" occupational quality. Clearly, teaching represents a very convenient outlet (at the professional level) for youngsters with altruistic motivations. It is interesting to note, however, that with the exception of black girls, the opportunity to help others is not considered as important a job quality for seniors with non-teaching aspirations.

The possibility of becoming an important person and likelihood of making a lot of money are regarded as very important career qualities to blacks, regardless of aspiration level. However, these two desideratum are relatively unimportant to white youth, especially those whites aspiring to professional level positions. It seems that the monetary and prestige dimensions of professional level jobs are viewed more as "givens" for white youth. For black youth, on the other hand, imagery of occupation, even at the professional level, is closely tied to income and esteem.

Lastly, the chance for excitement ranks relatively high in importance for professionally oriented white youth, but is relatively less important for similarly oriented blacks. However, among those aspiring to teaching, proportionately more blacks than whites felt the opportunity for excitement was very important. As we noted above, it seems that blacks wishing to become teachers do not consider the chance for excitement less important relative to whites, rather, other occupational characteristics (e.g., money, prestige, etc.) are merely considered more important.

In conclusion, we have provided support to the notion that the perceptions behind the status attainment process clearly vary by race and sex. Interesting and important differences in patterns of career desideratum were evident among the four race/sex groups under investigation at all aspiration levels.

Of special interest were the occupational attitudes related to teaching. Our findings revealed that a youngster's social origins (as they reflect race or sex background) greatly influence how the

teacher role is viewed. To the extent that these occupational attitudes relate to eventual job satisfaction and career fulfillment is any area of research that must be explored further.

Finally, in this paper we were specifically interested in the occupational attitudes related to teaching. However, further specification of the relationship between career desideratum and career choice (especially as it relates to specific occupations) is clearly needed. Given the present results one might expect to find comparable race/sex differences among youth aspiring to other professional and nonprofessional careers.

NOTES

1. Excellent bibliographies relating to various aspects of the teaching profession including personality characteristics, social background, recruitment processes, attitudes, values, etc. can be found in Lortie (1975), Getzels & Jackson (1963), and Charters (1963).

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Table 1. Rank ordering of career desideratum* and percent indicating desideratum as "very important" by occupational aspiration: study populations compared.

Teacher Aspiration

White Boys (N=69)		Black Boys (N=56)		White Girls (N=210)		Black Girls (N=77)	
Steady	(62.3)	Steady	(64.2)	Help	(71.1)	Help	(67.6)
Help	(59.4)	Help	(62.5)	Steady	(40.8)	Steady	(62.7)
Excitement	(34.8)	Money	(46.4)	Excitement	(17.6)	Money	(48.1)
Own Boss	(21.7)	Excitement	(37.5)	Own Boss	(10.0)	Important	(37.3)
Money	(17.4)	Important	(32.1)	Important	(7.1)	Own Boss	(27.0)
Important	(17.2)	Own Boss	(23.6)	Money	(5.7)	Excitement	(26.7)

Other Professional Aspiration

White Boys (N=908)		Black Boys (N=237)		White Girls (N=721)		Black Girls (N=277)	
Steady	(60.7)	Steady	(66.8)	Help	(57.8)	Help	(73.5)
Excitement	(38.5)	Money	(45.6)	Steady	(45.3)	Steady	(72.2)
Own Boss	(30.5)	Help	(45.5)	Excitement	(33.3)	Money	(43.3)
Help	(30.0)	Important	(39.7)	Money	(19.1)	Important	(35.5)
Money	(29.5)	Excitement	(38.3)	Own Boss	(14.3)	Excitement	(34.9)
Important	(20.4)	Own Boss	(33.5)	Important	(11.9)	Own Boss	(22.1)

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued) Rank ordering of career desideratum* and percent indicating desideratum as "very important" by occupational aspiration: study populations compared.

Non-Professional Aspiration							
White Boys (N=477)		Black Boys (N=285)		White Girls (N=458)		Black Girls (N=374)	
Steady	(71.8)	Steady	(60.4)	Steady	(60.8)	Steady	(61.8)
Money	(42.6)	Money	(51.9)	Help	(41.5)	Help	(48.9)
Own Boss	(36.3)	Important	(38.7)	Money	(28.4)	Money	(48.1)
Excitement	(30.7)	Own Boss	(36.3)	Excitement	(18.7)	Important	(46.4)
Help	(27.1)	Help	(34.8)	Important	(14.0)	Excitement	(27.9)
Important	(24.8)	Excitement	(26.2)	Own Boss	(9.4)	Own Boss	(18.2)

*The key words used in this and subsequent tables refer to the following responses:
Steady - Gives you steady employment.
Help - Gives you a chance to help other people.
Excietment - Offers a chance for excitement.
Own Boss - Gives you a chance to be your own boss.
Money - Offers you the chance to make a lot of money.
Important - Gives you a chance to become an important person.

Table 2. Correlations (Yule's Q) between importance of career desideratum and sex* by occupational aspiration and race.

	Aspirations					
	Whites (boys vs. girls)			Blacks (boys vs. girls)		
Desideratum	Teacher	Other Professional	Non-Professional	Teacher	Other Professional	Non-Professional
Money	-.553	-.272	-.308	.032	-.059	-.085
Help	.254	.527	.310	.111	.536	.288
Important	-.010	-.310	-.343	.114	-.100	.161
Steady	-.412	-.300	-.245	-.032	.128	.032
Own Boss	-.428	-.451	-.690	.089	-.278	-.453
Excitement	-.427	-.115	-.315	-.245	-.086	.032

*Degree to which boys indicated a desideratum was "very important."

Table 3. Correlations (Yule's Q) between importance of career desideratum and race* by occupational aspiration and sex.

	Aspirations					
	Boys (whites vs. blacks)			Girls (whites vs. blacks)		
Desideratum	Teacher	Other Professional	Non-Professional	Teacher	Other Professional	Non-Professional
Money	.609	.340	.192	.877	.518	.403
Help	.065	.317	.173	.083	.329	.150
Important	.717	.446	.311	.772	.604	.687
Steady	.039	.133	-.251	.418	.516	.025
Own Boss	.054	.066	.013	.538	.261	.356
Excitement	.059	.013	-.102	.259	.042	.251

*Degree to which Blacks indicated a desideratum was "very important."

Table 4. Correlations (Yule's Q) between importance of career desideratum and teacher aspiration within race* and sex$^{\Delta}$ categories.

	Correlations between:			
Desideratum	White boys (+) and White girls (-)	Black boys (+) and Black girls (-)	Black boys (+) and White boys (-)	Black girls (+) and White girls (-)
Money	-.553	.032	.609	.877
Help	.254	.111	.065	.083
Important	-.010	.114	.717	.772
Steady	-.412	-.032	.039	.418
Own Boss	-.428	.089	.054	.538
Excitement	-.427	-.245	.059	.259

*Correlations refer to comparisons between boys and girls.

$^{\Delta}$Correlations refer to comparisons between blacks and whites.